

APPROVED MINUTES

Corporation

Date & Time	19 th February 2024	5:30pm
Date of next meeting	18 th March 2024	5:30pm
Location	E201	Telford College
Governors attending	Gail Bleasby	GB Chair of the Corporation
<i>Via Teams (t)</i>	Chris Pallett	CP Vice Chair of the Corporation
	Graham Guest	GG Principal & CEO
	Kevin Barton	KB Independent Governor
	Gill Eatough	GE Independent Governor
	Jim Arnold	JA Independent Governor
	Hollie Whittles	HW Independent Governor
Clerk	Joanna Perch	JP Governance Professional
In attendance	David Sidaway	DS Chief Executive, TWC
	Janet Stephens	JS Deputy CEO
	Louise Biffin	LB VP Finance & Resource
	Chris Pemberton	CPe VP Curriculum
	Caroline Bastow	CB Head of Quality & LTA
	Sarah Jones	SJ Assistant Principal Student Experience & Safeguarding
Apologies	Ruth Matthews	RM Independent Governor
	Teresa Tanner	TT Independent Governor
	Martin Seymour	MS Staff Governor (business)
	Jonathan Abbott	JAb Staff Governor (teaching)
	Karina Saini	KS Student Governor
	Jack Cooke	JC Student Governor
	Rehan Kashif	RK Student Governor

No.	Item	Action
TOUR OF STATON QUARTER PROJECTS' SITES		
1.	Tour of new building and Addenbrooke House Governors were given a tour around Addenbrooke House, and the Station Quarter (SQ) development followed by a presentation from DS on the plans / vision for the Station Quarter. minuted in confidential	

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

2. Welcome, apologies and introductions

GB welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from **TT, RM, MS, JAb, KS, JC,** and **RK.**

A quorum was present. Accordingly, the meeting was declared open.

3. Procedural matters

There were no declarations of any conflicts of interest or changes to the Register of Interests.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

Governors acknowledged **approval** from the wider Corporation of the minutes of the Corporation meeting held 15th January 2024.

Approved

5. Matters arising

5.1 **Items 2, 3,6, 7** and **8** were noted as blue and complete.

5.2 **Item 1** was noted as green, being near completion. **JP** informed the board of work carried out to date on the college handbook and that she was working to schedule a meeting with **GB** and **GG** to review a draft of the document before bringing back to the board at the March meeting.

5.3 **Item 4** was noted as green with CB splitting attendance and retention data over year 1 and year 2 students for comparison purposes moving forwards.

5.4 **Item 5.** Updates from the Head of Finance to better explain how SQ projects are handled in terms of costs / management accounts were noted.

6. Governors' updates

6.1 **JA** informed the board of his attendance of the Association of Colleges (AoC) Finance Master Class. He found it very useful giving background, insight and clarity, with much he was able to bring back and utilise within the audit committee and for understanding around information reported to corporation.

6.2 **CPa** reported the audit committee governors had met with **JP** to clarify understanding around their new roles, the role of the committee and its terms of reference. Having done so, the committee's updated terms of reference were on this evening's agenda for approval.

6.3 **HW** reported she was booked on the ETF Governor Induction course.
GE reported conversation held with the external reviewer from Governance4FE.

7. Haybridge Campus

7.1 **GB** asked if governors had any questions or reflections following the recent tour of the Haybridge Campus and presentation given on future plans.

7.2 Staff Communications

JA asked how staff communications regarding the Haybridge Campus plans had been received.

JS reported both she and the project manager had met with each team individually to discuss specific changes, followed by a comprehensive campus-wide communication to ensure everyone was informed. Overall, the feedback was positive, with the business support staff providing quieter feedback, and some concerns from the A-level team regarding the transition related to the SQ project and Addenbrooke House.

7.3 Addenbrooke House booking conflicts

HW raised concerns around the politics behind booking conflicts, asking what measures are in place to prevent the college bookings being pushed aside in favour of performing arts bookings, and suggesting a dedicated space within the design of the building for performing arts. **JS** stated the ground floor should be an open space and flexible area that could be utilised for this alongside, the outdoor green space between the two buildings which could be utilised in good weather and gave confirmation this would be a space the college would have an overview of.

In response to **JA's** question about the overall progress of the projects, **JS** confirmed the projects were on track despite facing some logistical challenge, mentioning the addition of extra capacity for the project team.

STUDENTS

8. **Safeguarding Report**

[**SJ** and **CB** joined the meeting at 5.59pm]

8.1 **SJ** provided the Safeguarding update, noting that mental health concerns at Telford College align with national trends, with an increase compared to last year. However, as staff intervene and students become more familiar with the college environment, incidents decrease, leading to effective support and student retention.

8.2 Student Homelessness
Despite an increase in homelessness, proactive measures, such as assisting with universal credit, ensure students remain in college.

8.3 Child On Child Sexual Violence And Sexual Harassment
SJ highlighted the significant decrease in child-on-child harassment for January 2024 compared to January 2023, attributed to the heightened profile of sexual harassment through the Loudmouth intervention sessions and through the tutorial programme noting the cumulative total of online instances is similar to last year, with no discernible reason for fluctuations.

8.4 External Review
An external review of the single central record (SCR) is scheduled for next month in line with good practice, and preparations are underway for an external safeguarding inspection by TWC on March 18th. No concerns have been raised by the team in preparation for the visit.

8.5 Staff Training
Attended by the BeSafe Safeguarding Officers (SGO), keeping the team up to date:

- St Giles: Gangs and criminal exploitation
- Applied suicide intervention skills training (ASSIST) x2 SGOs
- Trauma informed practice training

8.6 Strategic Focus and Board Assurance
JA queried why there was such big movement in numbers between January last year and this year, asking if this is typical.
SJ suggested it could be attributed to different term times, resulting in students spending varying weeks within the month at college versus at home compared to last year.

8.7

SJ emphasised the positive aspect of the increase in reported instances, noting that it reflects students' feelings of safety within the college and their confidence in bringing their issues forward, and knowing where to seek help. This sense of safety is a significant positive. Additionally, **SJ** observed that parents are also reaching out to the BeSafe team, indicating a growing trust in the college's support system.

8.8 After query from governors around the figures, it was acknowledged whilst challenge from governors is welcome and necessary, it primarily lies with the safeguarding team to analyse and interpret the figures. Following interpretation of this data, the team will bring their analysis to the board, enabling the board to take a more strategic approach to addressing issues. **SJ** emphasised that while analysing the figures and working directly with students, any issues that arise are immediately brought to the senior leadership team, and when appropriate to corporation.

Smoothwall

8.9 **KB** asked if the criteria for identifying potential issues were subject to change. **SJ** stated the team has full control over the criteria and can adjust it accordingly with capabilities to add new keywords if they receive intelligence from sources like the police or the local safeguarding partnership regarding any new terms being used. This ensures effective filtering and monitoring of potential issues.

Safeguarding Practice Across Multiple Sites

8.10 **CPa** with the SQ projects there would soon be two sites with students to consider and queried what the approach to that would be. **SJ** stated all the good practice at the Haybridge site would be replicated. **CPa** provided clarification, expressing an expectation for policy and practice to remain consistent across the two sites, however, his enquiry was around the physical aspects including resources, capacity and personnel involved. **SJ** confirmed there were plans to replicate those. **GE** noted there would be more outdoor public space exposure for students at the new site, given its location in the town centre and proximity to the train station suggesting this aspect should be taken into consideration. Reassurance was provided that this was being considered.

Loudmouth

GB noted the success of Loudmouth and enquired about train the trainer opportunities so it can be rolled out again. **SJ** explained it's a specialist production meaning there were no train the trainer opportunities. **SJ** highlighted TWC have funded the college for two plays from within the Loudmouth series and the college can have as many showings of that play as the college wanted per year.

QUALITY

9. QIP Update

9.1 **CB** gave the December update noting the next update was due in March and would showcase the progress made much more effectively with much more quantitative data to show further impact of the actions that have been put in place.

9.2 Peer Reviews

CB highlighted a delay in the English department's peer review support due to personnel changes. While a staff member stepped up to assist and offer support, limited time available to access peer reviews has had an impact. **CB** stressed the importance of individual control over the reviews rather than management-led interventions, as it empowers the department to engage and manage the process themselves.

CB noted positives around retention and projected achievement.

9.3 A-levels

GE asked if the board would receive A-level data in March. **CB** confirmed the March update would include a report on Milestone 2 and mock exams.

9.4 Data Capture, Best Practice and Feedback

GB mentioned a possible theme around capturing data or best practices, particularly concerning the red RAG ratings, which indicated a slight lack of process in certain areas and enquired about how feedback is shared. **CB** noted the main concern was around work scrutiny. The next scrutiny is scheduled for March, making the current update slightly out of line with that timeline. **CB** suggested possibly revising the wording of the response noting that although the process exists and can be consolidated, providing specific answers for each aspect may be challenging. **GB** asked if there was a hub for best practice. **CB** confirmed there were shared resources through the manager's shared drive and a Teams account where departments control their own resources.

[**SJ** and **CB** left the meeting at 6.17pm]

MANAGEMENT UPDATE

10. **KPI report**

10.1 New report format

JS presented the KPI report, highlighting a new format aimed at improving clarity. Financial KPIs have been removed as they are already in the management accounts, avoiding duplication and allowing more space for detailed information on apprenticeships. The report is now split by month, providing a clearer, more strategic view for governors regarding variances and forecasts, whilst SLT still monitor weekly, on a more operational level.

10.2 Adult Education Budget (AEB)

AEB data was previously combined, making interpretation challenging. It is now split over the two contracts, WMCA and ESFA. This adjustment enables a clearer understanding of the college's position.

10.3 Digital

JS noted historical challenge with digital provision prompting **GB** to ask how that sits with the strategy of the SQ projects. **JS** noted item 11 includes an update around this. Discussion followed around the changing landscape. **HW** expressed interest in promoting the college's digital provision to small local businesses but found there was no appropriate material available from the college to circulate. **JS** agreed this was a missed opportunity that should be pursued.

10.4 There was discussion around balancing employer demand with profitability among governors and staff. It was noted that if there is local community demand for a service, there is a duty to provide it regardless of profitability. **JS** highlighted that some apprenticeships also infill into the full-time study programme, which should be considered. **JS** informed the board that the college is currently reviewing its approach to digital provision. While there is clear demand for digital services, there seem to be some barriers that need to be addressed to fully capitalise on this opportunity. **KB** pointed out that employers themselves may need education on the specific digital provision they require, and highlighted the complexity of the questions that need to be asked due to the broad spectrum of digital provision available.

10.5 **GG** provided assurance to the board by explaining that each course is thoroughly assessed at a top level, to determine its contribution. If it's not contributing, the question is then whether to continue with it. **GG** stated failure to conduct this assessment is the fastest route to financial instability for the college, but noted the college may decide to keep a course if it has impact elsewhere or because it is important to the community.

- 10.6 **JS** requested feedback from the board via **JP** on whether this new layout delivered the type of information wanted by the board.
- 10.7 **GB** highlighted the challenges in producing the report. **GB** encouraged the board to feedback to **JP** whilst emphasising the need for the corporation to adopt a strategic rather than operational approach, stressing the importance of being mindful of the board's role in this process.
- 10.8 **GB** enquired whether the attendance level could be attributed to post-Christmas lag.
CPe noted a recent change in management noting a new management approach involving measures such as contacting parents, utilising certificates and delivering progression talks were being employed to enhance student engagement and competitiveness.
- 10.9 **GB** raised specific concern regarding 19+ students noting previous challenges with this cohort and observing a downward trend.
- 10.10 **CPe** acknowledged the difficulty in managing this group, attributing challenges to conflicts between family duties and timetable issues and gave assurance of how the team will be mitigating these challenges by considering feedback on timetabling, providing pre-access courses to manage expectations, and further investigation and adjustments regarding engagement strategies.
- 10.11 Following question from **KB** as to why the target is so high, **GG** gave explanation around the dangers of setting low targets and bringing attendance down even lower versus the motivation for both staff and students, gleaned from setting higher targets. **KB** then emphasised the importance of directing limited resources to priority areas.
- 10.12 **GE** queried whether the figure shown was with regard to all learners across the college, both full time and part time noting it could be useful to see the information broken up over different courses and groups of students.
- 10.13 **JA** noted the inclusion of last year's figures was useful for monitoring progression.

11. College Update

- 11.1 Annual Strategic Conversation
GG provided an update on the recent annual strategic conversation, highlighting its positive nature, particularly regarding stakeholder management. He commended the corporation for the positive outcomes and informed the board to expect a letter summarising the conversation and any identified areas for further consideration. **GB** expressed appreciation for the positive and constructive nature of the conversation.
- 11.2 Applications for 24/25
GG noted applications were significantly up for Sept 24/25 for both young and adult learners across all provision except for engineering and music.
- 11.3 Appointed Director of Business Solutions and Director of 6th Form
GG noted that despite the difficult market, the college had been successful in appointing a new Director of Business Solutions and Director for 6th Form. Both impressive candidates.

11.4 Lovells Partnership

GG informed the Board; the college had a “built by you” partnership with Lovells which was about finding entry to the construction industry with unemployed and disengaged people and going on to find them work. It was noted this had been a successful event held in the Orange Tree.

11.5 Supporting NHS Workforce

GG informed the Board the college had been asked by BBC London to interview regarding the impact the college has had locally, noting the significance of this and acknowledging the good work around developing NHS relationships at the very highest level.

11.6 **GG** noted the college’s Director of Health will be involved in a television piece at the end of Feb and **JS** noted the Director of Health was also in the March edition of Red Magazine as the face for Health T-level placements sponsored by DfE.

11.7 Student Enrichment

The following student enrichments were highlighted:

- Haberdashers’ Abraham Darby School – Engineering students
- World snooker player visit
- CVLS football tournament for secondary schools – student organised and supported the event
- Energize – basketball tournament

12. **The Landscape for FE Curriculum**

12.1 The FE Model

JS delivered a presentation regarding the landscape for FE curriculum, highlighting the adaptable nature of the FE model and noting its design to flex according to changing circumstances. **JS** underscored the complexity and diversity of funding within the FE sector, emphasising the constant evolution of its financial framework. **JS** emphasised the distinctiveness of the FE sector compared to other educational establishments and how it is driven by employer markets and individual student demand and provided insight into the dynamic nature of funding, particularly evident in the Adult Education Budget (AEB), which necessitates ongoing monitoring and adjustment throughout the year.

12.2 Telford College

JS highlighted there is currently no necessity to expand for increased income or retract for cost-cutting measures. It was emphasised that the college is in a financially outstanding position and is well placed in terms of quality, financial stability, and geographic reach. **JS** reiterated the college’s efficiency in resource management, citing the positive outcomes of the FEC review on efficiency conducted last year. It was noted college budgets in the FE sector are designed to adapt to opportunities while maintaining financial stability. **JS** emphasised the importance of continuous adaptation to evolving policies in response to local, regional and national skills demands.

12.3 Future Landscape

It was emphasised that Telford & Wrekin is the primary area of focus for the college, as it is the core reason for its existence. This was highlighted by the greater town centre presence in the station quarter projects.

12.4 Discussion took place around the possible local devolution opportunities). **JS** stressed the importance of strategic planning and considering alternative scenarios to navigate this uncertainty effectively.

12.5

JS also drew attention to the fact that while the college is currently situated in the Marches region, other colleges in the area are likely to be exploring alternative options. This underscores the need for the governing body and senior leadership team to carefully consider the college's future direction in light of these developments.

12.6

GE noted that this decision would be directed rather than being the college's choice. **GG** explained the discussion would primarily be about prioritising the allocation of the college's resources.

Additionally, **JS** highlighted the Marches Education Partnership logo, which is a brand built around the three colleges located within the Marches area with associated branding and websites. This may indicate a potential direction for future funding initiatives.

12.7

CPa suggested the possibility of seeking expertise on the Corporation Board in the political landscape through a market search for individuals who could provide valuable insights around the table.

12.8

Higher Education / L4+

JS outlined Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), encompassing levels 4 and 5, are relatively new qualifications serving as a bridge between A-levels and full degree programmes. These qualifications typically include Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), with emphasis on fields such as digital, engineering and health.

12.9

It was noted that HTQs are replacing HNDs which are currently offered by the college. Modular Acceleration Programmes (MAP), for which the college successfully bid, aim to accelerate the modular aspect of HTQs in preparation for the implementation of the lifelong learning entitlement in 2025.

12.10

The lifelong learning entitlement, scheduled to commence in 2025, will provide funding equivalent to a four-year study programme for individuals over the age of 18. This entitlement will replace advanced learner loans and student loans. Individuals will be able to utilise the lifelong learning entitlement to fund courses at universities or colleges.

12.11

In anticipation of this entitlement, the college is exploring the possibility of splitting HTQs into modular components. This will allow individuals to select specific aspects of the qualification and utilise their lifelong learning entitlement to fund them.

12.12

Overall, the modular acceleration program aims to prepare the college for the implementation of the lifelong learning entitlement and facilitate flexible learning options for students.

12.13

The college sees this as a significant opportunity.

12.14

GE queried whether online learning would be available. **JS** confirmed it would be a hybrid model.

12.15

Apprenticeships

JS addressed areas for improvement in the apprenticeship programme. The college conducted a lessons learned exercise, resulting in the identification of key areas:

12.16

- Curriculum planning: Focus on identifying growth areas for better allocation of resources.
- Capacity: Acknowledgment of the need for increased capacity, especially in overseeing both AEB and apprenticeships.
- Application process: Recognition of the need for a more balanced approach between quality and financial considerations in the application process.
- Resourcing: Highlighting challenges in staffing, particularly in recruiting engineers and digital lecturers, as well as space limitations in engineering workshop facilities. Additionally, there is a need for a robust CRM system, which currently lacks ownership.

12.17

Actions in place were:

- New Director of Business Solutions
- Solutions approach and an external presence – ambassador role
- Changes to the interview process
- Rebrand/Refresh Digital and Professional Studies

12.18

Governance

JS noted a discussion around what governors needed to see for assurance would be useful. Due to time restraints, it was suggested **JP** add time for this discussion to the agenda for the next meeting and share the presentations on Governor Hub. Governors noted how useful the presentation had been.

JP to circulate presentations and allot time on next meeting's agenda for discussion around board assurance.

FINANCE

13. Management Accounts

13.1 **LB** reported the management accounts for December 2023.

13.2 Income:

Income is slightly under budget and forecasted to remain so by the end of the year. Despite this, a surplus is still forecasted at the end of the year, albeit slightly lower than budgeted. Key risk areas identified by **JS** are around apprenticeships and Adult Education Budget (AEB), which are crucial to the income stream.

13.3 Pay:

Agency costs are slightly higher due to seasonal sickness, but long-term sickness cases have improved, with only three cases currently. Non-pay costs continue to run favourably.

13.4 Cash:

Cash position is reported as £8.3 million at the end of December. £240k was repaid to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for the 22/23 tuition fund.

13.5 Benchmarking:

Overall, benchmarking indicates positive performance across all areas except pay costs, which have crept into Amber. However, increasing income could potentially bring this back into the green zone. Addressing agency costs as seasonal staff transition out is expected to make a significant difference.

13.6 The Finance department will continue to monitor and address these financial aspects to ensure the college's financial stability and performance remain on track.

13.7 **GB** queried whether all necessary payment to Kickstart had been made and was referred to item 15 on the agenda.

14. Technical changes to funding rules - subcontracting

14.1 **LB** reminded the board all subcontracting needs to come to the Corporation for approval.

14.2 **LB** informed the board there had been a technical change in the WMCA AEB funding in terms of how its applied.

14.3 **LB** explained, due to this change, one element of what the college delivers, “upskilling”, will be reclassified as subcontracting.

14.4 As a result, approval is sought from the Corporation to change some provision from Partnership delivery to the Subcontracting framework from 1st February 2024 to 31st July 2024, as detailed in the report.

14.5 **CPa** noted recent changes in what was subcontracting and what wasn’t subcontracting and sought assurance around whether or not this might change again, highlighting the importance of properly updating the college auditors given the amount of time given to date around the subcontracting classification at both Corporation and at Audit.

14.6 **LB** explained the dependency on WMCA’s classification of delivery and gave assurance that all the relevant documentation to provide evidence of the change would be shared at audit committee.

LB to share relevant evidential documents for reclassification of subcontracting at audit committee.

14.7 The Corporation **approved** the request for additional subcontracting with college Partners as outlined in the “technical changes to funding rules-subcontract 23/24” report submitted.

Approved.

15. Kickstart Update

15.1 **JP** informed the Corporation:

15.2 For the purpose of the minutes, I would like to reiterate and confirm approvals previously given by the Telford College Corporation, regarding the closure of the MAT under the name of TCAT, as we approach the final meeting of the TCAT MAT trustees, being held 13th March 2024.

- The Telford College Corporation formally approved the transfer of the TCAT MAT to LCT.
- Telford College Corporation formally approved the £500k contribution towards the Kickstart / Queensway capital project.
- Telford College Corporation formally approved the decision to close the MAT under the name of TCAT.

15.3 **The Corporation acknowledged they were satisfied this was a true record of events.**

Approvals acknowledged.

POLICIES

16. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy

GG presented the revision of the current policy on behalf of the Strategic Transformation Officer, noting minor amendments and recommendation to review on a 2-year cycle.

KB suggested the policy should highlight the difference between equity and equality.

PB to highlight difference between equity and equality in the policy.

GB noted there was an annual report on the analysis behind this policy due. **GG** agreed this would be picked up.

PB to bring annual EDI report / analysis to the Corporation.

The Corporation **approved** the EDI policy, subject to the clarification around equality and equity.

Approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

17. Audit Committee Terms of Reference

CPa presented the amended Terms of Reference for approval, as recommended by the Audit Committee.

The Corporation **approved** the revised Audit Committee terms of reference.

Approved.

FINAL BUSINESS

18. Questions, comments, self-assessment, and reflection

JA suggested staff members presenting to the Corporation when meetings are held off site, should dial in via Teams.

GB suggested the WMCA / Marches position was on the risk register. **JS** confirmed it was but would need updating for the latest position.

Head of Finance to update WMCA / Marches position on risk register.

19. Any other business

CPa suggested the need to review succession planning for the governors. **GB** confirmed this was discussed during the annual strategic conversation and she had requested a meeting with the Principal, Governance Professional, and Strategic Transformation Officer to review this.

[Non-Confidential session ended at 7.34pm]